



Too sick for school?

Deciding whether your child is well enough to go to school can be tough for any parent. And, what were once mild symptoms like sore throat, cough, or a headache are now signs of a possible COVID-19 infection, which can spread to other kids and teachers. Follow these guidelines to help you decide if your child is too sick for school.



COLDS

Use over-the-counter saline nose drops or spray and a cool mist humidifier to relieve symptoms. Because colds are caused by viruses, antibiotics are not effective. Instead, the cold just needs to run its course until the child recovers. You should still test your child for COVID-19. If positive, follow the most current guidelines for managing the infection. If negative, contact your child's doctor if a cough suddenly worsens or a fever develops.

FEVER

Test your child for COVID-19. If positive, follow the current guidelines for managing the infection. If negative, give acetaminophen or ibuprofen for fevers. Encourage the child to drink lots of fluids and avoid fatty or fried foods that are hard to digest because fevers decrease stomach activity. Keep children at home if their fever is above 100.4°F. Call a doctor if a high fever lasts more than 24 hours or does not respond to medication, or if the child's condition worsens.

FLU

Striking more suddenly and more intensely than a cold, the flu causes a sudden, high fever with body aches. Have your child vaccinated early in the flu season to protect against this illness. You should also test for COVID-19. If positive, follow the current guidelines for managing the infection. If negative, a child who comes down with the flu should stay home for several days, rest, and drink lots of fluids. Call a doctor if a high fever lasts more than 24 hours, or if other symptoms worsen.



CONJUNCTIVITIS ("PINK EYE")

A red, weeping eye(s) with a thick discharge that could become crusty when sleeping. Contact your child's doctor for treatment, which may include antibiotic eye drops. Conjunctivitis can be highly contagious. Children can usually return to school 24 to 48 hours after treatment begins. Check with the school's policy.

HEAD LICE

Tiny, crawling bugs that live on the scalp and feed on blood. Itching and sores on the scalp can be signs of head lice. The insects cannot jump or fly and are spread by human contact. Under bright light, check the entire scalp closely for lice or tiny white eggs (called nits), starting at the upper neck and behind the ears. Lotions and shampoos that can kill the lice are available at the drug store. Check with the school's policy about keeping your child home from school until the lice have completely gone away.

SORE THROAT

Test your child for COVID-19. If positive, follow the current guidelines for managing this infection. If negative, have your child drink a few sips of water. If that relieves the symptoms, you are likely dealing with, at worst, a viral infection that will go away with a few days of rest, plenty of liquids, and pain relievers. If you suspect strep throat, contact your child's doctor.

STOMACH ACHE

Keep children who have been vomiting home from school. Test your child for COVID-19. If positive, follow the current guidelines for managing the infection. If negative, wait an hour after the child vomits and encourage small drinks of water. Gradually introduce clear liquids and bland foods throughout the day. Contact your doctor if vomiting lasts beyond 24 hours, occurs with worsening pain at the belly button or lower right abdomen, or if the child vomits blood or green or yellow matter.